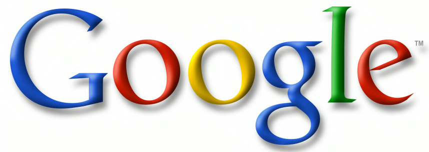

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THE OBER-AMMERGAU PASSION PLAY

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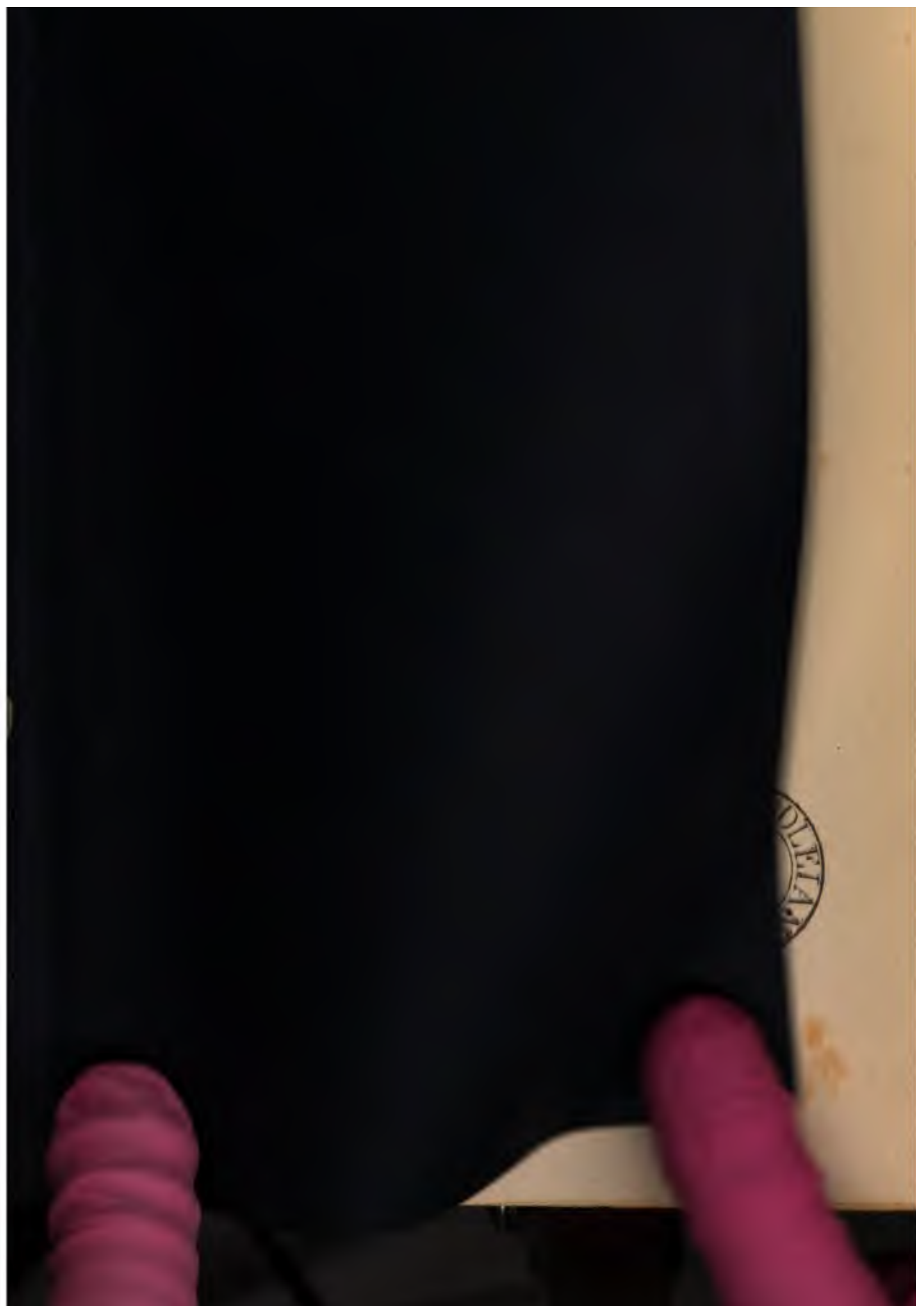

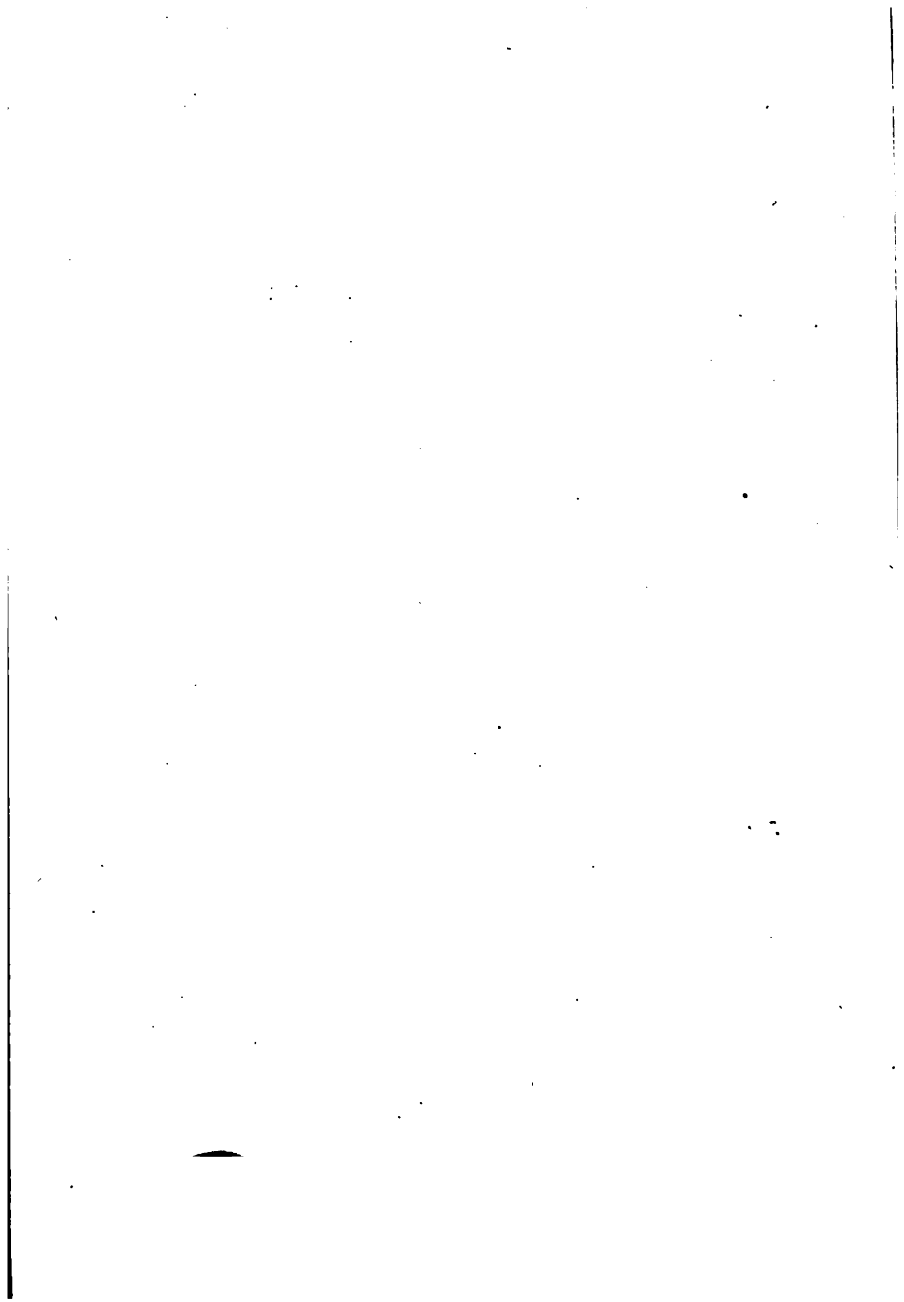

THE OBER-AMMERGAU PASSION PLAY

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WITH SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MIRACLE PLAYS, AND SOME PRACTICAL HINTS FOR THE USE OF INTENDING VISITORS

BY THE

REV. MALCOLM MACCOLL, M.A.

CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD NAPIER, K.T.

RIVINGTONS

London, Oxford, and Cambridge

1871

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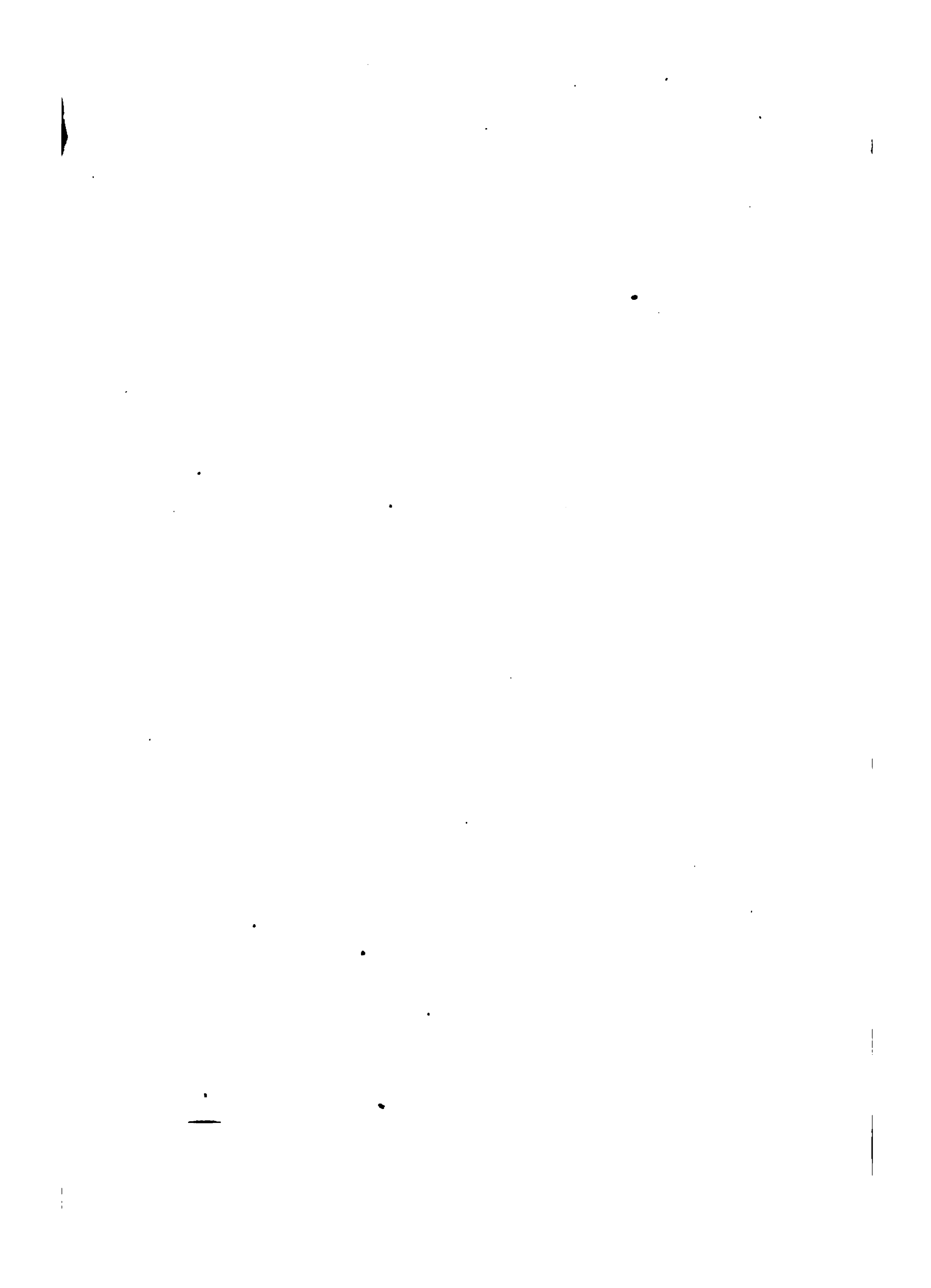

DAYS ON WHICH THE PASSION PLAY IS TO BE ACTED IN

1871.

June	24.				
July	2	9	16	25	30.
August	6	14	20	27.	
September	3	9	17	24.	

If on any of these days there are more visitors than the theatre will hold, the play is repeated on the following day.

NAMES AND AGES OF THE PRINCIPAL *DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.*

Character.	Name.	Age.
Christ	Joseph Mair	26
Peter	Jacob Hett	60
John	Johannes Zwink	19
Virgin Mary	Franziska Flunger	24
Mary Magdalene	Josepha Lang	26
Herod	Franz Paul Lang	55
Pilate	Tobias Flunger	54
Judas	Gregor Lechner	50
Caiaphas	Johann Lang	35
Annas	Gregor Stadler	50
Nathaniel	Paul Fröschl	63
Ezekiel	Sebastian Deschler	49
Joseph of Arimathea	Thomas Bendl	31
Nicodemus	Anton Haafer	64
Roman Centurion	Joseph Zwink	48
Barabbas	Johann Allinger	56
Choragus	Johann Dimmer	40
Principal Contralto Singer	Josepha Flunger	22

PREFACE

TO THE

THIRD EDITION.

THOSE who intend to visit Ober-Ammergau this year will be glad to learn that the principal characters remain unchanged. A few of the actors in the subordinate parts, among them Simon of Cyrene, "have remained behind in France," as Madame George Lang euphemistically puts it in a letter which she has been good enough to write to me. Joseph Gutzjell, the conductor of the orchestra, and my kind host last year, has left the place; but the villagers are very musical, and they have supplied his place without difficulty.

In answer to numerous inquiries, I here subjoin a table of my expenses last year from London to Ober-Ammergau :—

	£	s.	d.
London to Cologne, 2nd class, *vià* Dover and Ostend	2	9	0
Extra for 1st class on board steamer .	0	5	0
Difference on 1st class from Verviers to Cologne	0	5	10
Cologne to Bingen (steamer), 1st class .	0	6	0
Bingen to Nuremberg, 2nd class . .	0	16	0
Nuremberg to Munich, 2nd class . .	0	11	0
Munich to Weilheim, 2nd class . .	0	2	6
Weilheim to Ober-Ammergau, carriage and pair	1	1	0
	£5	16	4

It will be observed, first, that this does not include hotel expenses; secondly, that the journey was made all the way by second class, except on three occasions, when I travelled first class; thirdly, that I went out of my way in going to Nuremberg. I have omitted also some extra expenses for lug-

gage, because they were quite unnecessary. Hotel expenses are, of course, a matter of taste; but, if wines are dispensed with, six shillings a day will easily cover every thing. I hired a carriage from Weilheim to Ober-Ammergau; but I might have made that part of the journey by omnibus for about three shillings. On the whole, I have no doubt that one may go to Ober-Ammergau by Cologne and Munich, and return within a fortnight, for £15. This would include all *necessary* expenses, and would enable the traveller to have a second-class ticket all the way to Ober-Ammergau and back. By taking the steamer from London to Antwerp, or Ostend, and travelling third class, I believe the trip could be made for £10, provided the traveller can speak German. But I would not advise any one to attempt it, even by the cheapest route, with less than £15 in his pocket.

A through-ticket from London to Munich saves trouble; but it is a mistake as regards expense. Let the traveller take his ticket from London to Ostend (if he goes that way), a second ticket from

Ostend to Verviers, and a third from Verviers to Cologne, and he will save at least ten shillings between London and Cologne.

I hope to see the Passion Play this year again myself; and I have not the smallest fear that my second visit will mar the favourable impression of my first.

LONDON, *May* 24, 1871.

INTRODUCTION.

IT is a trite observation that the drama, both ancient and modern, had a religious origin. The Grecian mythology was the source, and furnished much of the materials, of the tragedy of Greece. In addition to that public worship of the gods in which there was nothing of mystery or concealment, there were, as every body knows, a variety of Mysteries in which only the initiated could share. In these Mysteries there does not appear to have been any exposition of doctrine or any course of oral instruction. It was not the intellect that was addressed, at least primarily and directly, but the bodily senses and the imagination. After the initiatory rites of lustration and sacrifices, all the rest was an elaborate drama in which were represented the diversified adventures and

various transformations of certain deities, with their relations—sometimes malign, sometimes beneficent—to the human race. This circumstance had an enduring influence on the subsequent drama of Greece, which retained to the end a semi-mythic character. The scene and characters are almost invariably laid in a remote past, and represent the results of actions rather than the actions themselves. The heroes of the national legends are seen on the Greek stage, not struggling or scheming, vanquishing or being vanquished, but in still and solemn repose—in a *state* of misery or happiness, rather than on the way towards it. There is thus no development of character, no play of human passion; and hence the use of the mask, which concealed the features of the actors, and gave to the face the appearance of preternatural impassiveness; hence also the liberal employment of *tableaux vivants* to illustrate and interpret the successive acts. Another reason for this characteristic of the Greek drama was, no doubt, the immense size of the ancient theatres. Any one who has

seen an old Greek theatre will understand the simple impossibility of any acting which required the visible expression of human emotions. Every citizen had a right to a seat—generally to a free seat. The theatre of Syracuse, for example, which is still in tolerable preservation, is 467 feet in diameter, and contains 61 tiers of seats; and any one who has looked across its vast depth will hardly consider 30,000 as an exaggerated estimate of the audience which it was capable of seating. No human organ could send articulated words across that space, and no play of features, however lively, could be seen by those who sat at the back of the theatre. Artificial means were therefore necessary, both to increase the size of the human figure and face, and to swell the volume of the human voice.

The early Christian Apologists denounced the Greek Mysteries in the severest language. Clement of Alexandria, who took so favourable a view of Greek philosophy as a preparation for the Gospel, pronounces the sternest condemnation on the demoralizing influence of the Mysteries, into which

he seems to intimate that he himself had been initiated before he became a Christian. But the early Christians were not satisfied with denouncing the impure Mysteries of Pagan mythology; they did not rest content with driving out the ev
leaving the house "empty, swept, and gar
They took pains to show that they had m
of their own with which to tenant it, m
which were as purifying and ennobling
heathen Mysteries were loathsome and deg
And thus the Christian drama rose graduall
ruins of the Greek theatre. A considera
matic element enters into the compositio
the early Christian liturgies, and still m
the circumstances attending the celebratio
principal festivals of the Church. The e
constantly appealed to, in order to deep
confirm the impressions made by oral ins
on the understanding. And as soon as Christianity emerged from the Catacombs, and found itself in the enjoyment of freedom, it made a bolder and more direct attempt to enlist the sympathies of its

converts by means of dramatic representation. We find Greek tragedies on sacred subjects almost coeval with the establishment of Christianity, and there is direct evidence to their representation at Constantinople. One of these is the "Dying Christ" of St. Chrysostom, which was acted in Church, partly in *tableaux vivants*, and partly in dialogue. St. Gregory Nazianzen, too, and other early Christian writers, dramatized portions of Holy Scripture on the model of the ancient Greek plays.

These religious plays made their way gradually from the East to the West. We have records of convent plays in Germany as early as the time of Charlemagne. But the religious drama does not appear to have taken firm root in the West till about the eleventh century, when a great impetus was evidently given to its popularity—probably by means of the Crusades, which introduced into Western Europe many of the customs of Eastern Christendom, and, among the rest, the passion for the scenical representation of religious subjects. In no country did the Miracle Plays attain an earlier

popularity than in England. Matthew Paris tells us that a graduate of Paris, called Geoffrey, afterwards Abbot of St. Alban's, while teaching a school at Dunstable, caused the legend of St. Catherine to be acted in that town, Geoffrey himself, with some of his scholars, taking the principal parts in the play. This was in the beginning of the twelfth century, but no manuscript of the play has come down to us. The earlier of these religious dramas were all written in Latin, and as most of the spectators were unfamiliar with that language, it is probable that the play was acted chiefly by means of *tableaux vivants* and pantomime. The earliest Mystery Play which has come down to us in the English language is "The Harrowing of Hell." It belongs to the earlier part of the fourteenth century, and consists of a prologue, epilogue, and intermediate dialogue. The principal *dramatis personæ* are Dominus and Sathan, Adam and Eve. The best known, however, of the English Mystery Plays, and the most famous, are those called the "Chester Mysteries," of which a good edition was published

thirty years ago, by the Roxburgh Club. Warton refers them to the beginning of the fourteenth century, while Roscoe, on the other hand, denies them an earlier date than the beginning of the sixteenth century. The truth lies probably between the two, and we may feel tolerably safe in placing the origin of the Chester Mysteries at least as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century. They cannot be called, popular though they were, a favourable specimen of the religious drama. There is not much evidence of genius in any of them, and some of them belong to the lowest and coarsest type of comedy. Indeed, the Miracle Plays, especially in England, soon degenerated into buffoonery, and were frequently placed under the ban of the Church, as tending to bring sacred things into contempt. As early as 1360 we find Bishop Grandison of Exeter forbidding the acting of plays at Christmas[1]. But their popularity at Court and among the masses proved too strong for Episcopal

[1] See Mr Prebendary Walcott's "Sacred Archæology," p. 448.

censures. Edward III., in particular, was passionately fond of these entertainments; and Mr. William Longman, in his interesting and learned life of that monarch, gives the following inventory of articles used in a play performed at Guildford during the Christmas of 1347:—

"Eighty-four tunics of buckram of divers colours, forty-two vizards of divers forms, twenty-eight crests, fourteen painted cloaks, fourteen dragons' heads, fourteen white tunics, fourteen peacocks' heads with wings, fourteen tunics painted with peacock's eyes, fourteen swans' heads with their wings, fourteen tunics ornamented with stars of beaten gold and silver, fourteen likenesses of women's faces, fourteen likenesses of men's faces with beards, fourteen crests with mountains and conies, fourteen dragons' heads, twelve men's heads and as many elephants' heads, twelve men's heads with bats' wings, twelve wild men's heads, seventeen virgins' heads, five hoods of long white cloth, worked with blue men dancing, three harnesses, two of which were of white velvet, worked

with blue garters, and diapered throughout with wild men; and, for the king himself, a harness of white buckram, inlaid with silver, namely, a tunic and shield, with the king's motto, '*Hay, Hay, the Wythe Swan, by God's Soul I am thy man.*'"

Akin to the Mystery Plays were the Moralities. These were allegorical dramas in which abstract qualities were represented on the stage, and may be regarded as an intermediate link between the Mystery Plays and the modern drama. The representation of abstract qualities led by an easy process to the introduction of individual character, and to the representation of ordinary life and manners. In the violent struggles of the Reformation the stage was largely used by each side as a weapon of offence against the other. The marriage of Luther was satirized in a Latin Morality, which was acted in Gray's Inn, in the year 1529[2]. The Reformers were not slow to retaliate; and so profane and indecent did some of these representations become that we find them prohibited in Privy

[2] Hallam's Lit. of Europe, i. 439.

Council ordinances under Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Mary. From the time of Henry VIII., especially, the Moralities were directed against the vices of the clergy, and of the monastic orders in particular; and the popularity which these satires against clerical delinquencies acquired shows how rife the body of the people were for a reformation of the Church, at least in the matter of discipline. Collier, speaking of Henry VIII.'s prohibition of these plays, says,—

"That nothing could be a greater profanation and abuse. These representations were made by some of the Gospellers. The subject of the entertainment was the immoralities and disorders of the monks and clergy; they took the liberty likewise to ridicule their religious worship. The mob was pleased with these theatrical shows, in hopes, it may be, of being set free from discipline and restraint. The clergy complained, as they had reason, against such licentious sport. This, they said, was the way to let in atheism, and make all religion a jest; for if people were allowed to burlesque

devotion, and make themselves merry with the ceremonies of the Church, they would proceed to further extremities, and laugh the nation out of their creed at last. The judicious and better sort of reformers disliked these courses, but the politicians of that party countenanced this licence and made great use of it, and upon what motives they went is not difficult to discover[1]."

In the summer of 1549 a proclamation was issued against Miracle and Morality Plays, in which it is stated that "the arguments of these entertainments of the stage went upon seditious subjects, arraigned the government, and exposed the constitution to contempt; that a great many tumults and disorders had been occasioned by this liberty; that therefore, from the ninth of the present August (1549), till the Feast of All Saints next coming, no person was to act any stage performance in English in any part of the realm, on pain of imprisonment and further punishment at the king's pleasure."

[1] Eccl. Hist. v. 92.

The Moralities and Miracle Plays, however, held their ground for a good century afterwards, and were witnessed on various occasions by Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I. Their last refuge was the City of London, where the relics of the old Moralities are still to be seen in the pageantry of the Lord Mayor's Show.

As the subject of this little book is a German Passion Play[4], a few words may be appropriate on the development of the religious drama in that country.

As I have said above, convent plays—that is Miracle Plays acted under the superintendence of the monks, and generally in the cloisters of the convents—were known in Germany in the time of Charlemagne. But the earliest specimen that has come down to us is the manuscript of a dozen

[4] The word "Passion-Play" was applied exclusively to the representation of Christ's Passion and Resurrection, as distinguished from the Miracle Plays or Mysteries, which had to do with the lives of the Saints.

dramatic plays, composed, for the edification of her nuns, by a remarkable woman, Hrotsvitha, Abbess of the convent of Gandersheim. She was born in 930, and tradition says that she was by birth a Greek princess. Her plays are written in Terentian Latin, and were frequently acted within the walls of the convent "to the joy and edification of the nuns."

From this time we read of similar plays and representations in Germany, as well as in Italy, Spain, France, and England; but they were all written in Latin, and the German muse took two centuries from the time of Hrotsvitha to learn the common language of the people. First the dialogue was translated into German, and then the strophes and anti-strophes of the chorus. Then the whole play assumed a German dress, and the costumes were those of ordinary life at the time. The man who personated Christ appeared as Van Eyks represents Him in his pictures, with a papal tiara, a rich tunic studded with pearls, and a stole and pastoral staff. In the Epiphany Plays the

Three Kings wore the costly dress of the knights and merchants of the time—velvet and fur coats, and rare foreign stuffs. The ordinary actors wore the costumes of common citizens and peasants, with pointed shoes and head-circlets of tinkling bells.

One of the earliest and simplest of the German Mystery Plays was the "Lament of the Virgin on the Death of Christ," a sort of religious dirge, acted on Good Friday by way of preparation for the joy of the Easter festival. It was modelled, both in the melody and form, on the "Meistersang," which occupied an intermediate position between the gaiety of the "Volkslieder" and the gravity of the chorale. There is a great variety of these "Mary's Laments," and they may possibly have suggested the well-known "Stabat Mater."

To the "Mary's Lament" succeeded the Passion Plays, representing the Passion, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ. At a later period the Ascension of Christ was represented, and also the Assumption of the Virgin—a tradition that floated westward,

probably in the wake of the Crusaders and pilgrims. The "Destruction of Jerusalem" and the "Day of Judgment" were also among the earliest of the religious plays of Germany.

In the beginning of the fourteenth century the German religious drama made a decided step forward. Till then the representations took place in the churches. Now, stages were erected in the streets and market-places, with several stories one above another, to give greater scope for scenical display. The number of actors was also greatly increased—sometimes amounting to several hundreds—and the whole thing was conducted on a much more expensive and elaborate scale. The most celebrated of the early German plays, and which obtained the widest popularity, was the "Ludus de Decem Virginibus;" or, "Tragedy of the Ten Virgins." It was brought out in Eisenach in 1332, and with such overpowering effect that it threw the Landgrave Frederick into a fit of apoplexy, which he never got over, and of which he died two years afterwards. He was a prince of in-

domitable spirit, as he had proved not only under the cruel treatment of his profligate father, Albert the Bearded, but even more in the struggle which he maintained, at last successfully, for his rights against two Emperors and against Vladimar, Margrave of Brandenburg. The evening of his life promised to end calmly and happily; so that he was called Frederick the Joyful, in allusion to the peace and joy of his later years, as contrasted with the sadness of his childhood and the stormy period of his contest for his rights. On the whole, he did not appear a very likely man to be killed by a Mystery Play; but so it was.

It happened thus. In 1332 the inhabitants of Eisenach and the neighbourhood were anxious to celebrate the return of peace by means of some public entertainment; and the Pastor of Eisenach, willing to gratify their wishes, suggested the performance of a Miracle Play. The subject chosen was the Parable of the Ten Virgins, which was dramatized by a Dominican monk, and acted by brothers of the Order. The piece has considerable

merits, and a short outline of it may be interesting, and also help to explain the extraordinary effect which it produced on Frederick the Joyful, though the pomp of the scenery, and the vigour and solemnity of the acting, to which Johannes Rothe testifies, must be left to the imagination. Every scene has its corresponding sacred songs and antiphons, as well as recitations and dialogues.

First appears the "Dominica Persona," or person who takes the part of Christ, with Mary and the Angels singing in the top story of the stage, which represented Heaven. Then the Virgins of the Parable, in two divisions, and already differing in dress and aspect, make their appearance on the second floor, representing the world. After some singing an angel announces the Play to the people thus:—"Silence! Good people, and take heed. We bring you news of the dear Son of God, Jesus Christ. Oh! how sweet to name His name!"

Christ Himself then bids His angels fetch those who had been invited to His feast: *Dicite invitatis:*

Ecce prandium Meum paravi ; Venite ad Nuptias. Whereupon two angels descend among the Virgins, and exhort them to be ready to go into the feast with loins girt and lamps burning. As the angels ascend into heaven and the curtain falls, the Wise Virgins take up the strain of Christ's message and exhort each other to perseverance and watchfulness. The Foolish Virgins, on the other hand, encourage each other to procrastinate. God did not mean His creatures to be for ever worrying themselves. He gave life in order that it might be enjoyed. Time enough to begin thinking of death when age approaches. God does not desire the death of a sinner, but on the contrary wishes him to return and live, and one may therefore safely trust to His mercy. When the zest of life is gone, one may then cut off one's hair, and go into a convent, and mortify the flesh. And so the Foolish Virgins dance merrily off the stage.

A third scene follows, in which one of the Wise Virgins comforts her sisters in their afflictions. They are despised and rejected of men, but it is

for their Master's sake. They are now sharing His sufferings, but He will soon return as the Bridegroom of His virgin choir, and they will enter with Him to the marriage feast.

The next act represents the Foolish Virgins, slumbering heavily after a revel, and slowly awakening, but only to find that their lamps have gone out, and they have not wherewith to replenish them. They are seized with consternation, and after a hurried canvassing of various schemes, they go at last to the Wise to borrow oil. They make a most touching appeal, but the Wise Virgins refuse, for they have none to spare—no superfluous graces which they can afford to impart to others. The distracted suppliants rush about every where to relight their lamps, but in vain. And meanwhile the Bridegroom appears. An angel announces His arrival to the Wise Virgins, who, being ready, at once join the bridal train and enter into the wedding chamber. Christ bids Mary place them beside her, and she, executing her Son's command, puts crowns on their heads, and promises them

the supreme joys of heaven. The Wise Virgins then sing the *Sanctus* and *Gloria in Excelsis*, and Christ holds His feast with His ransomed guests.

While this is going on, the Foolish Virgins stand outside, and implore to be admitted. They bewail their folly, appeal to His bitter death and tender mercy, remind Him that they are weak women, and appeal to His love for His own Virgin Mother. But the answer is, "Too late. Ye have wasted your lives, and never more can enter in." The wretched suppliants then address their prayer to "Mary, Mother, Maid," and adjure her by her pity, of which they had heard so much, and which they now so sorely need, and for the honour of her sex, to intercede for them to her Divine Son. Mary promises to try, but fears it will be in vain. She kneels, and earnestly entreats her Son to forgive the Foolish Virgins. He explains to her the impossibility of breaking His eternal laws even to oblige her, and refuses her petition. There is then a representation of hell, with the devils carrying off the lost, the Foolish Virgins among them. At this

sight the Virgin kneels again before her Son, points to her motherly heart, which the sword had pierced for love of Him, and once more asks pardon for the Foolish Virgins. Christ answers her gently, and tells her that a too late repentance makes salvation impossible, and the Foolish Virgins must now go into that state which they have prepared for themselves.

Then follows a graphic description of the terrible memories and unavailing regrets of the lost, and the joyful surprise of the saints at being rewarded so much beyond their deserts.

This was a view of the Gospel which excited and terrified Frederick the Joyful. "What means this Christian faith," he exclaimed, "if God will not pity us even when Mary and the Saints intercede for us?" He started for Wartzburg in a towering passion, and was "so infuriated that it was five days before the learned could make him understand the Gospel." But that fright was too much for him. He was seized with apoplexy, and never left his bed again till he was carried two years afterwards to his grave in the Chapel of St. John at Eisenach.

It is impossible to read the "Tragedy of the Ten Virgins" without being struck with the healthy and elevated morality which runs through it. It may be assumed, I suppose, that the drama of a period is a fair index of its moral and religious condition. If this be granted, we may argue that the state of society which is depicted in the "Tragedy of the Ten Virgins" could not have been so hopelessly bad as some declamations on the vice and ignorance of the "Dark Ages" would lead us to believe. When we reflect, too, that the "Tragedy" is the composition of a Dominican preacher, we may infer that mediæval divines were not so incapable of preaching the pure Gospel as they are sometimes represented.

From the end of the fourteenth century we have copious notices of dramatic representations in various parts of Germany. Some of them were on a very large scale, both as regards the accessories of the play and the time it took to act. In some instances it took more than a week to get

through the performance; and so realistic was the representation, that serious accidents sometimes occurred. In a Passion Play in Metz, in 1437, the priest who acted our Lord's part nearly died on the cross. He was taken down in a state of insensibility, and another priest took his place, and went through the rest of the play. Another priest who played the part of Judas all but succeeded in hanging himself.

It was customary for the man who personated Judas to have a black bird—a raven if possible—under his robe, which flew away when the suicide took place, to represent the Traitor's black soul. Sometimes, too, a dummy was made to play the *rôle* of Judas in the suicide scene, and it was so contrived that the rope broke at the proper time, and the figure fell and burst open. Another variation was to let Judas drop through a flaming aperture representing hell, amidst the crashing of boards and the shouts of the spectators.

In the fifteenth century a writer of the name of R. Bart composed a gigantic Play, which consisted

of eight thousand verses, and embraced the whole Bible history from the creation of the world to the resurrection of Christ. There is, however, as far as I know, no record of its having ever been acted.

These Plays, and especially those that represented our Lord's Passion, found a genial home among the picturesque valleys of the Tyrol, where they maintained their ground long after they were driven out of the plains. Some remnants of them still survive in secluded places; but the only place where the old Passion Play is still performed in its integrity, and with all the splendour and more than the reverence of ancient days, is Ober-Ammergau.

In 1780, on the manifestation of a movement in favour of putting down Miracle Plays, the inhabitants of Ober-Ammergau received from the Churfürst, Karl Theodor, special permission to continue the representation of their Passion Play. In 1790 this privilege was renewed, but all similar plays elsewhere in Bavaria were forbidden, partly on the ground of their interfering with industry,

and partly for moral and religious reasons. In 1810 another attempt was made by the Bavarian authorities to put down Miracle Plays, and no exception was made in favour of the decennial Passion Play of Ober-Ammergau. The villagers sent a deputation to Munich to plead the cause of their Passion Play before the ecclesiastical authorities, but in vain. They then addressed themselves to the king's chaplain, Anton Sambuga, who succeeded in obtaining for them the usual royal sanction.

The Ober-Ammergau Passion Play had in the meantime undergone various revisions. The most considerable of these revisions took place in the beginning of this century. The play was then entirely rewritten and rearranged by Dr. Ottmar Weis, one of the monks of Ettal, and afterwards a pastor in the neighbourhood of Ammergau. He died in 1843, at the ripe age of 72. The last revision of the Play was made between 1840 and 1850, by Anton Aloysius Daisenberg, a pupil of Dr. Ottmar Weis.

Up to 1830 the Play was always acted in the

churchyard of Ober-Ammergau; but, in that year, the pastor of the village refused the use of the churchyard, and the inhabitants were thus compelled to hold the representation outside the village. In the end this was a great advantage, for the churchyard was too confined; and, in addition, the numerous gravestones seriously interfered both with the acting and the scenery.

Whatever profits remain, after defraying the necessary expenses of the Play, and making a contribution to a Reserve Fund, are devoted to charitable purposes. In 1860 the number of visitors was 60,000, and the proceeds were 54,000 florins, or £5,400.

I have been asked by several to give some practical information for the use of intending visitors to the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play, and I do not know that I can do better than copy the following letter which appeared in the *Times* of June 27. It puts in a clear and concise form the information which I had myself collected on the subject:—

To the Editor of "The Times."

SIR,—I was one of those who were present at the Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau, which is so admirably described by your correspondent, who has entered into the whole spirit with which it is carried out. Anxious that others should enjoy such a privilege, I collected on the spot whatever information I thought might be useful to others, and I now forward it to you.

Ober-Ammergau may be reached from three quarters.

1. From Munich by Weilheim (2½ hours' rail), and thence by carriage or omnibus in four or five hours.

2. From Innsbruck by carriage in twelve or fourteen hours, by Zirl, Seefeld, and Partenkirchen, a most beautiful road. An omnibus leaves the Moonshine, Innsbruck, every Saturday morning at 5 A.M., reaching Ammergau at 8 P.M.; fare, three or four florins. The charge for a carriage is forty or fifty florins.

3. From Bâle, *viâ* Constance to Lindau, and

thence by rail to Kempten (two hours and a half), and on by carriage in twelve or fourteen hours to Ammergau by Fussen and Steingarten, skirting the foot of the mountains. Carriage thirty florins.

Travellers would do well to arrive on Friday night or early on Saturday, to see the influx of the country people late in the evening. Rooms and tickets should, if possible, be secured beforehand.

Sebastian Veit (Madam Veit speaks French as well as German), George Igwinck, and John Lang are among many who receive strangers, and if their rooms are full they will provide others, and give every local information as to carriages and routes. There is no difficulty in finding conveyances to leave Ammergau after the performance. Letters should be directed, "Ober-Ammergau, Bavaria." Board and lodging cost from three and a half to five florins per day. The fare is simple, but good; and the accommodation is perfectly clean, but of a humble character.

The days fixed for the ensuing months are

July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; August 7, 14, 21, 28; September 8, 11, 18, 25, 29.

I remain,

Yours faithfully,

June 25. M. S.

I will only add to the information supplied in this letter that the most direct route from England to Ober-Ammergau is by the Rhine and Munich. Those who do not mind a five hours' sea-passage will find the Dover and Ostend route very pleasant. By leaving Charing Cross in the morning (at 7.30 I think) they will arrive at Cologne about 10.30 the same evening. If time is no object, they can go up the Rhine by steamer; but the only part of the river that is at all worth seeing is that between Bonn and Bingen. The best plan, therefore, would be to take the train to Bonn, catch the steamer there, and leave it at Bingen. From Bingen there are various routes to Munich; but the lover of the picturesque will probably prefer to go a little out of his way, to see charming old Nuremberg. The distance from Bingen to Nurem-

berg is from five to six hours, and from Nuremberg to Munich somewhat less. Munich will repay a sojourn of two or three days. The hotels are excellent, and most reasonable. I stayed for ten days at the Vierjahreszeiten (Four Seasons), which is supposed to be the best in Munich, and I can recommend it in terms of unqualified praise. I paid less than I should pay at a second-rate hotel in Paris, and I fared as well as I should fare at one of the first-class. My experience is confined to the Vierjahreszeiten, but I was told that the other hotels in Munich are also excellent. It is safer to engage rooms beforehand. I was there in the beginning of June, and even then the hotels were very full.

The visitor to Ober-Ammergau ought, if possible, to arrive there on Friday, and he should leave Munich by the first train (6.30 A.M.). He can either take the train to Weilheim, where he can hire a carriage at a very moderate price to Ober-Ammergau (my friend and I paid 17*s.* for a very good carriage and pair); or he may leave the train

at Starnberg and go by steamer (which meets the train) to Seeshaupt, a distance of fifteen miles. From Seeshaupt omnibuses and diligences run to Murnau; and at Murnau, which is about two and a half hours' drive from Ober-Ammergau, he will have no difficulty in getting a vehicle of some kind, especially if he gets there on Friday. Murnau is a nice clean town, and has an excellent inn, the "Post." The sail on the Starnbergsee makes the journey a few hours longer—a drawback for which the scenery on its banks hardly makes up. The view of the snow-capped peaks of the Tyrolese mountains from the deck of the steamer is certainly very pretty; but that is almost the only view worth seeing which the traveller misses by declining the steamer and going on to Weilheim by the train. I went by Weilheim and returned by Seeshaupt; so that I give the result of my own observation.

Those who wish to make certain of lodgings in Ober-Ammergau should write beforehand to some person in the village. The writer of the letter given

above mentions several names, to which I may add Madame George Lang, and Joseph Gutzjell, the schoolmaster of the village, and also the conductor of the orchestra at the Passion Play. Letters should be written in German.

Visitors should be careful to provide themselves with opera-glasses, as the seats in the covered part of the theatre are at a considerable distance from the stage.

It is strictly forbidden to take notes during the performance, and a transgression of this rule renders the delinquents liable to expulsion from the theatre.

THE

OBER-AMMERGAU PASSION PLAY.

(*From an occasional Correspondent.*)

OBER-AMMERGAU,
Whitsunday.

THROUGH the kindness of a friend I was fortunate enough to secure a room here before I left England. Still I thought it prudent to take time by the forelock, and my friend and myself accordingly got up at five o'clock yesterday morning, and after a hurried breakfast found ourselves in the train at Munich at half-past six. About half-past eight we arrived at the Starnbergsee, a pretty lake, fifteen miles long and three and a half broad. A steamer is in waiting here to convey to the other end of the lake such passengers as wish to vary their journey in that way. We were anxious, however, to reach our destination with as little delay as possible, and therefore went on by rail to Weilheim. The line skirts the west

bank of the lake, so that we did not lose much of the views by declining the steamer. About half-past nine we reached Weilheim, where we found an abundance of vehicles of every description waiting the arrival of the train. The distance from there to Ober-Ammergau is about twenty-seven miles, and we engaged a two-horse chaise to take us all the way for the moderate sum of seventeen shillings. For the first twenty miles of our drive we passed through an undulating country, prettily wooded and well cultivated, and reminding us occasionally of English park scenery. Before us stood the Bavarian highlands, with their fantastic peaks peering like spectres through the gradually dissolving mist, and their lower parts draped in a blue transparent veil of tremulous haze. At Murnau, a handsome little market town, we stopped for an hour and a half to rest our horses and to dine. Then, after another hour's drive through the open country, we entered a magnificent mountain gorge, not unlike the Pass of Killiecrankie, in Perthshire, but far surpassing it in wild grandeur. Our road, which now

became so steep that our horses had much difficulty in dragging the empty carriage after them, followed the course of the Loisach, a stream which murmurs gently enough at this season of the year, but which must make music of a different sort when it is swollen by winter floods. On each side of the Loisach rise almost perpendicularly two lofty mountains, covered to their summits with pines, and as you look back, after a quarter of an hour's ascent, you see the entrance of the pass as it were shut in by the giant forms of the Zugspitz and Wetterstein, two wild, bare mountains streaked with snow, the one nearly 10,000 feet, and the other over 7000 feet high. As we approach the summit of the pass we see in the distance, high above the valley, what looks like a huge dome surmounted by a cross, with two weights hanging down from each arm. On inspecting it through the glass, however, the dome turns out to be the summit of a rocky precipice, called the Kofel, which rises perpendicularly to the height of at least 2000 feet over against the village of Ober-Ammergau. On the top of this precipice

the pious villagers have erected a colossal cross between two young pines, which look in the distance like pendant weights. At the top of the pass, on a grassy slope of the mountain, stands the Benedictine monastery of Ettal. What an eye those Benedictines had for scenery! The chief of their houses, Monte Casino, stands on a craggy steep befitting the position which it so frequently occupied in the Middle Ages as the refuge and stronghold of religion and civilization. But, as a rule, the Benedictines made their home, where it was possible, in some secluded mountain nook, away from the turmoil of the world, as became their studious habits. The monastery of Ettal was founded in 1332 by the Emperor Ludovic, was suppressed in 1803, and is now in the possession of a Bavarian nobleman, who uses part of it as a brewery. It has some good pictures by Tyrolese painters, and a fine ceiling by Knoller; but the most curious object in it is a miraculous image of the Virgin, which, according to the legend of the place, was presented to Ludovic by an angel. In front of the monastery is

a tall may-pole, which was gaily decorated yesterday as we drove past.

Three miles beyond Ettal lies the village of Ober-Ammergau, in the valley of the Ammer, a small clear river from which the village takes its name. It is completely shut in by mountains. On the south-east towers the frowning Kofel, having on each side of it jagged peaks covered with pines. On the opposite side of the Ammer, on which the village stands, the mountains, though high, are softer. They are clothed with pine; but immediately behind the village are green grassy slopes. The village was in a glow of sunshine, and looked its very best as we drove into it at half-past three yesterday afternoon. We made at once for the house of the worthy woman who had promised to provide lodgings for us. She was as good as her word. Her own house was full, but she had secured rooms for us in the house of the village schoolmaster, Gutsjell by name. Nothing could be better, for our host is not only the schoolmaster of Ober-Ammergau, but in addition the postmaster and

sexton, and on this occasion the conductor of the orchestra at the *Passionsspiel*. He is a talkative, intelligent, and most obliging man, and while his wife was preparing our dinner he volunteered to show us over the theatre, and give us our choice of places for the performance, which is fixed for to-morrow, so as not to interfere with the high festival of to-day.

The theatre, a wooden erection, is just outside the village, between two rows of poplars, and is evidently constructed after the model of an ancient Greek theatre. The proscenium is exposed to the sky, except a portion in the middle, where most of the acting and all the *tableaux vivants* are performed[1]. On the front gable of this covered part a village artist has painted a star-spangled firmament, with the figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity, and crowned by a carved representation of the fabled pelican suckling its young from its pierced breast. On the left of the proscenium, as you face it from

[1] The stage is 118 feet broad, 168 feet deep, and contains a surface of 20,000 square feet.

the auditorium, is Pilate's house, and on the right the house of Annas, the high priest; and beyond, along the open space on either side, you see the streets of Jerusalem stretching away in the distance. The seats in the auditorium rise tier behind tier, as in a Greek theatre. Four-fifths of them are open deal benches, uncovered and roofless. Behind these, and separated from them by a wooden partition, is a row of comfortable cane-bottomed chairs, and in the centre of the row are two large arm-chairs, which our host told us were intended for royal personages. Behind the chairs are tiers of wooden benches stuffed and covered with canvas. This part of the auditorium is roofed with a wooden scantling, which shields it effectually from rain and sun. Admission to all parts of the theatre is by ticket, and the highest price is five shillings, so that the managers of the Passion Play cannot be accused of avarice, for the demand is so great that they might really charge any thing they liked.

This morning, at eight o'clock, I attended high mass in the village church. The church, which is

by no means small, was as full as it could hold, and I never saw a more devout congregation. Every one, old and young, had a book in the vernacular, and evidently followed the service without difficulty. After the Nicene Creed the priest retired into the vestry, where he left his chasuble, and ascended the pulpit in his alb and stole. He knelt down and said a short prayer in silence, then stood up and gave out the notices for the week, after which he read the whole of the Gospel for the day, and founded on it a good extempore sermon of half an hour's length, impressing on his flock, among other things, the necessity of holy dispositions for the contemplation of the spectacle which they were to witness on the morrow. After the sermon and the ascription at the end of it, he said, in German, "The Lord be with you;" to which the congregation with one voice responded, "And with thy spirit." He then turned to the east, and began the Apostles' Creed in the ver[illegible] the congregation repeating it after him w[illegible] which I have seldom heard equa[illegible] reed all knelt down, and said

the Lord's Prayer in German, after which they sang a litany, also in German, the men and women singing alternate verses. After the litany the priest left the pulpit, put on his chasuble, and went on with the rest of the mass. In addition to the high mass at eight, there were five low masses, one every hour from three o'clock to eight, and they were all well attended by devout communicants. There were several other services all through the day, and the church was full at all of them; nor did the women predominate, as is the case in too many places on the Continent.

It has been raining with but little intermission the whole of to-day, and I begin to fear we shall have a wet day for the *Passionsspiel* to-morrow; but Herr Gutsjell is a man of cheerful temperament, and he assures us that the rain of to-day is a sign of a fair morrow. The village is crowded with visitors, and I wonder greatly how the inhabitants manage to provide for such a large influx of strangers. There are more, too, coming, and they will continue to come all through the night. I have just taken a

stroll outside the village, and the whole valley seems alive with travellers, some on foot, a few on horseback, and others in vehicles of every shape and size. Many of them must sleep in the open air in spite of the rain, for the village contains but 1300 souls, and there must be seven times that number of strangers in it to-night.

Many of your readers are, of course, acquainted with the origin of the Ammergau Passion Play; but for the sake of the multitude who are not so well informed, it may be well to give the history of it in a few words, as it will help them to follow the detailed account of the play which I hope to send you in my next letter.

In the year 1633 there raged in the neighbourhood of Ammerthal (Valley of the Ammer) a deadly plague which threatened to depopulate the districts infected. These were Partenkirchen, Eschelohe, and Kohlgrub—all separated from Ammerthal by a rampart of mountains. The Ammerthalers took every precaution to protect their valley from the dread contagion, but without avail. A native of

Ammerthal, who worked during the summer in Eschelohe as a day-labourer, evaded the quarantine, and entered the valley by a secret path in order to celebrate among his family an annual church festival. He carried the infection with him, and on the second day after his arrival he was a corpse. In three weeks eighty-four of the small community were carried off, and the mourning and terrified survivors, despairing of human succour, made their supplication to God, and registered a solemn vow that if He heard their cry, and removed the plague, they would represent every ten years, "for thankful remembrance and edifying contemplation, and by the help of the Almighty, the sufferings of Jesus, the Saviour of the world." So runs the local tradition, which goes on to say that the prayer was heard, "for not a single person died of the plague after the vow was made, though many were infected with it." In the following year the first fulfilment of the vow was made, and our Lord's Passion was first represented in Ober-Amme[illegible] been continued since then withou[illegible] ery ten years. The

sanction of the King has to be obtained before each representation, and is given as a matter of course. Within the last fifty years the Play has been improved both in the text and in the music; in the former by one of the monks of the Ettal Monastery named Ottmar Weis, in the latter by Rochus Dedler, who was born in the year 1779, became the schoolmaster of Ober-Ammergau in 1802, and died in 1822. His bones lie in the village churchyard, but his soul still lives among the grateful villagers in the sweet music which he bequeathed to them, and which they resolutely refuse to publish. They will not suffer a single melody or bar of it to be copied. Libretti of the play may be had in abundance; but these do not contain a note of the music, and of the words only the chorus songs. The rest is committed to writing and learnt by heart, but is kept secret among the performers. Visitors are forbidden to take notes during the performance.

And now I think I have given your readers as much information as is necessary by way of preparation for my next letter.

OBER-AMMERGAU,

June 8.

Neither visitors nor natives, I take it, had much sleep here on Sunday night. A band of music paraded the village in the early part of the evening, and all through the night the air was alive with the sound of human voices, the tread of many feet, and the rumbling of carts and carriages, with now and then the boom of a gun. The inhabitants began the day with solemn acts of worship to Him the details of whose passion were about to be acted before their eyes "for thankful worship and edifying contemplation." There were masses every hour, from three o'clock to seven. Our landlady had our breakfast ready for my friend and myself at six, and we bent our steps towards the theatre about seven. The day was gloomy. It rained all through the night and early morning; but now only a few drops fell at intervals. Still the weather looked any thing but cheerful. The sky was leaden and sullen, and the surrounding mountains were covered with thick mist down almost to their base.

On reaching the theatre a few minutes after seven we found it full almost to overflowing, except the comparatively small portion which was roofed over. This was about half full. We presented the tickets which Herr Gutsjell had procured for us, and were shown into the two best seats in the theatre—the arm-chairs intended for royalty, which I mentioned in my last letter. Royalty had not put in an appearance on this occasion, and so our kind host managed to get the vacant chairs assigned to us. Considering that the Play lasted eight hours and a half, with an interval of an hour in the middle, it was a great boon to be seated in a comfortable arm-chair, with a ledge in front for one's book. Before the clock struck eight the theatre was as full as it could hold, and presented a picturesque appearance. Every variety of dress was represented, from the last Paris fashion to the traditional costume of the Tyrolese mountaineer, which consists of a shooting-jacket with green collar and facings, a waistcoat adorned with rows of shining buttons, short breeches reaching within

two inches of the knee, and green woollen leggings which cover the calf, but leave the knee and about an inch of the small part of the leg exposed. The foot is encased in a short sock, which rarely appears over a stout boot that reaches to the ankle, and the head is covered with the graceful hat and waving plume which are so becoming in their native home, where they harmonize with the rest of the costume and with the character of the scenery. Over this costume, when it rains, the Tyrolese hunter wears a loose covering with a hole in the middle for the head to pass through, somewhat like the Moorish burnous. Sometimes it is nothing more than a blanket; but if the wearer happens to be a dandy, he aspires to a more costly material; or, if he cannot afford that, he fashions his burnous out of sheepskins, with the long wool outside, and dyed according to his fancy. A man sat some benches below me enveloped in one of these woolly coverings of light sky-blue. Some of the women were bareheaded, with the hair gathered up behind in a variety of

tasteful arrangements, and others wore sealskin caps, not unlike the fur cap which the Russians wear in winter, except that the crown, instead of being flat and circular, is divided into two cones.

The orchestra took their places about a quarter before eight, and played a pleasing overture. When that was finished a gun was fired, and as its last echo died away among the mountains, the chorus entered at eight o'clock precisely. It consists of twenty singers—eight men and twelve women—the men in the middle, with six women on each side. They are all dressed alike, and, with one exception, have long flowing hair, smooth faces, and sandalled feet, so that in some cases it is difficult to distinguish the sex except by the voice. The dress consists of a loose robe, over which a white muslin tunic, trimmed with lace, falls down to the knee, and over this again a long mantle, open in front and reaching almost to the ground. The mantles and robes were of different colours—some purple, some crimson, and others blue; but all the tunics were white. The chorus entered from corre-

sponding doors on either side of the proscenium, and arranged themselves in a row according to height, the tallest in the midst, and the rest diminishing in stature on each side of him till they presented the form of an unstrung bow. The play consists of a series of acts in the life of our Lord, each preceded by one or more types from the Old Testament, represented in *tableaux vivants,* and the duty of the chorus is to explain each type, with its appropriate lesson, to the audience. The coryphæus, a handsome bearded baritone—the only man in the chorus who had any hair on his face—sang or recited in monotone a short explanation of the type and ensuing act. Then the chorus sang a fuller explanation, which generally concluded with a moral addressed to the audience. This was sung in harmony, and interspersed with trios, duets, and solos. When the chorus have sung their part about half through they divide in the middle and file off to the right and left of the drop scene. As they are doing this the curtain rises and you see the type in *tableau.* Those *tableaux* are quite wonderful for

their vivid realism and artistic grace. After the chorus have done singing the curtain falls, the chorus move off the stage to the right and left, and there is a pause of a very few minutes, during which the orchestra plays. Then the curtain rises again, and some incident in the life of our Lord is acted by the respective characters. The dialogues in these acts are sometimes very long, and are not given in any of the published *libretti;* but the elocution is so distinct that you hardly lose a word even at the distance where I sat. There is a prompter's box on the stage, but I do not know whether it was occupied. Anyhow, a good deal of the acting occurs at such a distance from it that the prompter's office must be somewhat of a sinecure. It must require an unusual effort of memory to remember all the parts; but there was not a single hitch from the beginning of the play to the end.

The play opens with a prologue explanatory of two *tableaux.* In the first Adam and Eve are being driven out of Paradise by an angel wielding a flaming sword. In the second *tableau* a cross is

seen with a figure clasping it in a kneeling attitude, and a group of little children kneeling before it, while the chorus, also kneeling, sing a plaintive melody, of which the words are—"Eternal One! hear Thy children's stammering prayer (for a child can only stammer), who, with holy awe, assemble to worship before the great sacrifice." And then the audience are addressed in the moral, "Follow by the side of our great Redeemer, until He has passed through His rough and stormy way and through His hot and bloody agony has gained for us the victory."

The curtain here falls, the chorus retire, and when the curtain, after a short interval, is again raised, you see a motley crowd of men, women, and children, in oriental dresses, and with branches in their hands. They are singing merrily and dancing with joy, and as the end of the gay procession comes in sight you see in the midst of the rejoicing throng a striking figure, clad in a purple robe and crimson cloak, riding an ass. He has a handsome face, but his look is worn and sad, and

his dark brown hair, which is parted down the middle, falls over his shoulders. This is Joseph Mair, who represents the part of Christ this year. His face is of an olive complexion, but the skin of his neck is beautifully white. He stands considerably over six feet, and has a figure which a sculptor might covet for a model. As the procession winds down the slope of Olivet the crowd sing out a song of welcome to the Son of David, who comes in the name of the Highest to take possession of David's throne. On entering the streets of Jerusalem Christ dismounts, goes straight to the Temple, and drives out those who are profaning it with the worship of Mammon.

The next representation opens with a *tableau* of Joseph's brethren plotting his death, of which the chorus, as it does in all the *tableaux*, gives the explanation and points the moral. This is followed by a conclave of priests and Pharisees, discussing, with much animation of speech and gesture, the propriety and the means of putting Jesus to death. The next *tableau* represents young Tobias taking

leave of his parents, and is followed by a second in which the forlorn bride in the Canticles adjures the maidens of Jerusalem to give her tidings of her Beloved. This *tableau* is the only one in the whole play that can be called tame, but it is redeemed by the sweetness of the song in which the bride and maids of Jerusalem address each other. These two types introduce Christ taking leave of His mother and friends in Bethany, where Mary anoints Him, and Judas murmurs at the waste. In the fourth representation King Ahasuerus puts away Vashti, and raises Esther to her forfeited throne. The song which explains this *tableau* brings out with great skill the typical character of Vashti's deposition and Esther's elevation, the former signifying the rejection of the Jews, who had obstinately refused the King's summons to the Royal feast, the latter representing the call of the despised Gentile race. But these last are warned at the end of the song that the doom of Vashti will be theirs if, like her, they presume on their privileges, and abuse God's grace.

When the curtain is again raised Christ is seen with His disciples going over the brow of Olivet on His last journey to the guilty city. On the rising ground on the opposite side of the valley you see the towers, and walls, and battlements of ancient Jerusalem in the soft glow of sunset, with the gilded dome of the temple crowning the sacred height. The sight of His own city, beautiful and impenitent, sleeping in fancied security on the brink of death, overcomes the Saviour. He stops and bewails with tears her coming doom, because she knows not the time of her visitation. This is acted with great pathos, and is rendered still more impressive by the beautiful song which introduced it, and the refrain of which, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" is ringing in your ears—now rising in tones of anguished warning, now dying away in a wail of despair.

Meanwhile two of the disciples, Peter and John, had been sent before to provide a room where Christ might celebrate His last Passover, and you see them in the distance entering Jerusalem. They meet a lad carrying a pitcher, to whom they dis-

close their errand. He takes them to his master, who, on hearing whose messengers they are, gladly accedes to their request. Judas in the meantime conceives the idea of betraying his Master. When the others leave the house of Bethany, after the incident of the anointing by Mary, he stays behind, dallying with his own tempting thoughts. Presently one Pharisee, and then another, join him and artfully give shape and direction to the vague brooding of the avaricious man. At first he is startled and horrified by the suggestion that he should satisfy the longings of covetousness by the betrayal of Christ. But the suggestion has taken root in his heart, and at last he promises to go to the Sanhedrim to seal the compact of betrayal. Here the curtain drops, and the next scene discloses in succession two typical *tableaux*—the first representing the Israelites fed with manna in the desert, the second displaying in the midst of the crowd two men carrying between them on a pole a huge bunch of grapes from Canaan ; while in front, to the right and left, are the chorus explaining, in

song, that the manna from heaven and the grapes from beyond the Jordan signify the mystical bread and wine in the Blessed Sacrament. Here, as in some other *tableaux*, there were nearly 300 figures in every variety of posture, yet the most minute inspection failed to discover a single ungainly attitude or ungraceful *pose*, and they were all—even mites of children three years old—as motionless as marble statues. To these beautiful *tableaux* succeed the celebration of the last Passover and the institution of the first Eucharist. Our Lord and His disciples appear in a sitting attitude, evidently after the picture of Leonardo da Vinci; but Christ does not pass on the consecrated elements after the manner of the Presbyterian Sacrament. He goes round the group and administers personally to each, after which He girds Himself with a towel and washes the disciples' feet. And then the chorus, out of sight, sing a solemn hymn; and, immediately after, Christ gives the benediction, and as the curtain is falling you see the disciples following their Master to the Garden of Gethsemane.

The next *tableau* represents the sons of Jacob selling Joseph to the band of the Midianitish merchants, of which the chorus explain the connexion with the sinful bargain of Judas, and warn the audience against the too frequent tendency of Christians to repeat, through covetousness, the traitor's crime. This is followed by a scene representing the two tempters already mentioned leading Judas into the presence of the assembled Sanhedrim. After some chaffering on the part of the Council to reduce the price of blood, and some faint hauntings of better feelings on the part of Judas, the wretched man at length agrees to accept thirty pieces of silver, and counting them with the hurry of a guilty conscience, and dropping them into his bag, he rushes out, but not without a final menacing warning from the priests to be true to his promise and not to forget the concerted sign by which he is to indicate his Master. Before the bargain is concluded, however, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea plead for justice, and protest against the proceedings of the Council; but they are reviled and

brow-beaten, and leave the Council in high indignation.

The next type is a *tableau* of Adam and Eve, with seven children, tilling the ground in the sweat of their brow, which the chorus explain as typical of Christ's bloody agony in the Garden of Olives. This is followed by a second *tableau* typical of Judas's kiss of treachery. It represents a company of soldiers disposed in various attitudes, and in the foreground Joab with his sword thrust into the side of Amasa while in the act of kissing him. The chorus meanwhile sing an impassioned apostrophe to the rock of Gibeon, at which the assassination took place, and which stands out bare and desolate behind the assassin and his victim. The curtain falls, rises again in a few minutes, and you see a third *tableau* signifying Christ's triumph at the very time His enemies were mocking Him, and vainly imagining that they had Him completely in their power to do with Him as they listed. This type is Samson, who appears a prisoner in the house of Dagon. One of the pillars on which the house

stands is broken by his side, and the other is clasped in his left arm, and about to yield to his mighty embrace.

After these three *tableaux,* Christ appears with His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, and endures His agony. This is acted with remarkable naturalness, but with exceeding reverence. When the Saviour falls to the earth the third time beneath the bloody agony, an angel, with a chalice in his hand, appears over His head and addresses Him in words of comfort. This appears to strengthen Him, and He returns to the three disciples, whom He finds again asleep. He exhorts them to watchfulness, and tells them that the traitor is at hand. The rest of the disciples are in the background, and are suddenly roused from their sleep by the approach of the soldiers, led by Judas, who carries a lantern. Then follows an exact repetition of the Gospel narrative—the kiss of Judas and Christ's reproachful question, the inquiry addressed to the soldiers as to the object of their search, and their sudden prostration at the sound of His dread name, the

maiming of Malchus by the impetuous Peter, and the healing of the wound by Christ, who rebukes Peter, and tells him that He has no need of carnal weapons, since legions of angels would hasten to His side if that were compatible with the recovery of man's fallen race. The soldiers then rush upon Him, bind His hands behind Him, and lead Him away. The disciples escape; but John, followed timidly by Peter, returns and goes after the mournful procession.

This finishes the first part of the Play, and there is an interval of an hour. It is a little after twelve o'clock, and most of the audience leave the theatre to move their limbs and take refreshments.

At one o'clock the theatre is again full, and the second part of the Play begins with a very effective *tableau* of the scene described in the 22nd chapter of the 1st Book of Kings. Ahab and Jehoshaphat, in royal apparel and each holding a sceptre, are seated on their thrones. In front of them are some courtiers and a crowd of Jezebel's false prophets; and close to Ahab stands the only

prophet of the Lord, Micaiah, and Zedekiah, the chief of Jezebel's prophets, in the act of smiting him on the cheek. This, as the chorus explain, is a type of Christ struck by the soldier for answering the High Priest truthfully, and is a parable of the fate of truth in every age. "Lies, hypocrisies, and flatteries you may easily buy with roses and laurels; but you must bow before the truth, for it scorns to flatter, and is not amenable to bribes." After the *tableau* Christ is dragged by a crowd of soldiers and frantic priests before the house of Annas, who presently appears above the multitude on the balcony of his house. A dialogue ensues between Annas and the shouting multitude below, and then Jesus is led up to the balcony and questioned by the High Priest about His doctrines. Christ appeals to the publicity with which He had spoken and acted, and refers the High Priest to those who had heard Him and seen His works. Thereupon a soldier strikes him, and is mildly answered in the words of the Gospel. Annas then sends Christ to Caiaphas, and the curtain falls.

The next scene represents Christ arraigned before Caiaphas, found guilty, and condemned to death. The Gospel narrative is strictly adhered to in all its details, and the whole scene is acted with great power, but with an entire absence of any thing approaching to irreverence. The conduct of the soldiers and other persecutors is, of course, irreverent enough, but the Object of their indignities preserves such a majestic calm and such dignified bearing through it all, that pity, mingled with indignation and awe, absorbs the feelings of the audience. The part of Peter, too (represented by Jacob Hett), is acted exceedingly well in this scene. He who was so bold a while ago now creeps stealthily after St. John (Johann Zwink) towards the High Priest's door, and refuses to enter till John has got special permission for him from one of the servants. And even then Peter skulks about the place as if afraid of his own shadow. Now and then he approaches the fire, round which the soldiers are discussing the great event of the night, but shrinks back the moment he observes any one looking at him.

During one of these vain attempts to warm himself the threefold denial is made; and at the last cockcrow Jesus is dragged in with His hands tied behind Him, and He gives a look to Peter which drives the conscience-stricken man out into the night to weep bitter tears of repentance. This scene is preceded by two *tableaux*. The first represents Naboth stoned to death for blasphemy on the evidence of false witnesses. In the second Job sits miserable, by the side of a brick-kiln, against which his wife is leaning with a smile of fiendish mockery on her face as she tempts her afflicted husband to "curse God and die."

In the next scene, the Sanhedrim, after deliberation, confirm the sentence of death passed on Christ before the tribunal of Caiaphas. While this is going on Judas appears upon the scene, full of remorse for what he has done. The conception of the traitor's conduct among these village actors appears to be that he had betrayed his Master partly through avarice and partly from a vindictive grudge in consequence of the rebukes

and warnings which Christ had mercifully addressed to him on various occasions; but that he had no suspicion of the fatal tragedy in which his treachery was to end. He knew his Master's miraculous powers, and had seen Him more than once frustrate the evil designs of His enemies when He seemed quite at their mercy. Doubtless He could baffle their plots on this occasion also, and Judas would thus have the opportunity of pocketing his bribe, and putting an affront on his Master without the fear of any more serious consequences. But when he sees that Christ either cannot or will not save Himself, and must really die, the full magnitude of his crime fills his soul with horror, and he rushes into the midst of the Council to express his remorse, and, if possible, to turn them from their purpose. But his wild grief and vehement expostulation are heard with cold mockery by those who have used him for their purpose, and who now remind him that he has received his reward, and that his remorse is no concern of theirs. This is more than the miser-

able man can bear. He flings the bag containing the price of blood among the assembled priests, and rushes out. Presently he is seen again wandering about in the open country, and preparing, as the curtain falls, to commit suicide from the branch of a neighbouring tree. Gregor Lechner acts this part uncommonly well. It is preceded by a *tableau* in which Cain, holding a club, stands over the corpse of his murdered brother, and a woman with five children, one of whom is leading a lamb, occupies the background. Meanwhile the chorus sing an explanation of the *tableau*, which is remarkable for its subjective conception of hell. Instead of the coarse materialism of mediæval imagery, the hell of the sinner is depicted as a fire burning from within. Cain and Judas flee from the haunts of men, and the latter "flings from him, in wild haste, the intolerable burden of life." But in vain. The undying worm and the quenchless flame are within the sinner's ruined soul. The faces of his fellow-men and the scenes of his crimes—from these he may escape; but he cannot escape from himself,

and is therefore in hell, wherever his local habitation may happen to be.

In the next scene, which is preceded by a *tableau* of Daniel's enemies accusing him of blasphemy against the gods and treason against the King, Christ is accused before Pilate, who, after much discussion, sends Him to Herod. The latter receives Him with a certain amount of courtesy, for he hopes to see some manifestation of mysterious power. But Christ preserves a dignified silence, and Herod, in disappointed anger, gives Him up to the brutal mockery of the soldiers, who array Him in a white sheet, and lead Him back to Pilate. The scene before Herod is introduced by a *tableau* representing King David's servants insulted by the King of Ammon, as related in 2 Samuel x.

The next scene, before Pilate's judgment-seat, is a long and exciting one, and is a faithful rendering of Gospel history, with the addition of a few embellishments, such as the introduction of Barabbas between two gaolers, and subsequently of the

two thieves. This scene is divided into two parts, each introduced by two types in two separate *tableaux*. In the first division Joseph's brethren are showing their father the coat of many colours stained with blood. To this group succeeds a *tableau* of Abraham on Mount Moriah in the act of slaying his son. His uplifted arm is arrested by the voice from heaven, and he sees a ram with its head fast in a thicket. This is explained by the chorus as typical of our Lord crowned with thorns. The *tableaux* of the second act of the scene in the judgment-hall are (1) Joseph elevated to the second place of honour in Egypt, and riding in Pharoah's chariot in the midst of a rejoicing multitude; (2) the children of Israel in the desert drawing lots for the scapegoat.

We now approach the last act of the sacred drama; and the attention of the audience, which has never flagged through all these hours, becomes almost painfully intensified. The face of Nature, too, harmonizes well with the feelings of the vast multitude. The sky above looks gloomy and

threatening, and the picturesque forms of the surrounding mountains are concealed in a winding-sheet of mist.

The next scene is introduced by three *tableaux* in succession, all typical of the last acts of the Passion. In the first Isaac is seen ascending Moriah with the wood for the sacrifice on his back. His father holds him by the hand, and with the other hand carries a brasier containing the sacrificial fire. This is followed by two *tableaux* of wonderful impressiveness. The Israelites are encamped in the wilderness, and the fiery flying serpents are among them; some darting through the air, others creeping on the ground, where little children are innocently playing with them, all ignorant of danger till they receive the fatal wound. The curtain falls, and when it rises, almost immediately, the same multitude is seen, but in different attitudes. In the midst of them is a cross, and suspended from its arms a brazen serpent, on which the eyes of the wounded are fixed, obedient to a sign from Moses. The curtain falls again, and there is an interval of breathless sus-

pense. Then the sound of many voices is heard, and presently a horseman riding a grey charger emerges at the head of an excited procession from one of the gates of Jerusalem. As the procession winds its way slowly into view, the mother of Christ and Mary Magdalene, with other women and St. John, appear some way off, coming from an opposite direction. They are greatly agitated, and as they scan the advancing throng they see, turning the corner of Annas's house, the Man of Sorrows, blood-stained and bent beneath the weight of His heavy Cross, which He evidently cannot bear much farther. Some of the soldiers observing this, seize hold of Simon of Cyrene, who meets them accidentally, and compel him to bear the Cross. At this point Veronica, accompanied by two other women, comes out and fulfils the part assigned her in the legend—the only incident in the play which is not directly founded on Scripture. As He approaches Calvary, Christ addresses the daughters of Jerusalem in the well-known words, and in a short time He passes out of sight.

When the last of the procession has vanished, the chorus come on the stage in black mantles and sing a mournful song, bearing on the passion of Him "who loves, is silent, endures, suffers, and forgives." And through the melody of the song you hear the discordant strokes of a hammer, and shudder at the scene of which those ominous sounds too surely tell. When the chorus have finished their song the curtain rises, and you see two crosses erect, each bearing its victim. Between them, stretched upon the ground, is a taller cross with a sad, wan figure nailed to it. It is slowly raised and fixed erect into its socket. The head of the Crucified One is crowned with thorns, and his face bedewed with blood. You see the nail-heads in his hands and feet, and the blood oozing from the wounds. Of course, you know that his hands are not pierced with nails, but you try in vain to penetrate the illusion and discover the means by which he is fastened to the Cross. Herr Gutsjell, the conductor of the orchestra, assured us that even he did not know the secret;

it was revealed in the strictest confidence only to the man who personated Christ, and to those who nailed him to the cross and took him down. I had a good glass, but the most careful scrutiny failed to discover any thing bearing the semblance of a cord or bandage, except round the right wrist, where I fancied I detected something like a strap. The figure is covered with a close-fitting flesh-coloured raiment, and it is just possible for a strap to be fixed round the body and wrists without detection on the part of the audience. There is a small rest for the feet, but as they are placed one over the other, the relief afforded by the rest cannot be very great. There are certainly no cords used, and the body is certainly released from the Cross by the extraction of nails, not by the undoing of bandages. You see the nails actually extracted from the hands and feet, and the rigid limbs dropping helplessly down. A nail was also extracted behind the middle of the back, and here, of course, there must have been some clasp to hold the body; but it was impossible to see any thing. The physical

effort required on the part of the person crucified must be very great. He hung exactly seventeen minutes, and after he was taken down you could see the limbs of the Cross damp with his perspiration. The whole circumstances of the Crucifixion were gone through—the seven words on the Cross, as they are called, and all the other incidents recorded in the Gospels. Nature lent her aid to the verisimilitude of the scene, for there was a sombre hue over all the land as the pale figure cried, "It is finished," and dropped his head upon his breast. At this point a lad pushes his way through the crowd, and, rushing up to the High Priest, tells him that the veil of the Temple is rent from top to bottom. Amazement, not unmingled with terror, is depicted on the faces of the High Priest and Pharisees at this strange intelligence; but, instead of softening their hearts, it makes them more malignant, and they give expression to their rage by gnashing of teeth and violent gesticulations towards the central Cross. The two thieves were corded to their crosses, and their arms were not

stretched out, but drawn round and resting on the transverse limbs, so that their endurance was not put to any severe trial.

By and by Joseph of Arimathea appears armed with an order from Pilate to take the body of Jesus. Thereupon two soldiers approach the crosses with mallets in their hands. They strike each of the thieves in the legs and chest; but when one of them goes up to the Cross of Christ, Mary Magdalene stays his raised arm and pushes him back. Another soldier then pierces the left side of Christ with a spear, and a red stream issues out of the wound. The descent from the Cross—a most difficult achievement—was managed in a way that it is impossible to praise too highly. Two ladders were planted against the Cross—one before and one behind, the top of the former reaching to the feet of what appeared to be the corpse. Two men mounted and placed a long strip of linen (not a large cloth like that in Rubens's picture) across the chest and under the arms of the body, the ends being drawn up behind and allowed to fall

to the ground over the arms of the Cross, so as to supply a fulcrum to the man who was holding on from behind. As the last nail was drawn out from between the fingers, this man released his hold of the cloth, and the arms, head, and upper part of the body dropped gently over the shoulders of the man in front, who thus slowly descended with his burden to the ground. Let any one consider how he would feel going down a ladder with a heavy body over his shoulders, and he will have some idea of the "art concealing art" with which this was done, and with such seeming ease.

If one were to judge the Play by a high standard of taste, one might wish that it ended with the Crucifixion, for after that it deals with facts belonging to an order of ideas and relations which have no counterpart in human experience, and which therefore cannot be represented in human action. [illegible] ust be borne in mind that this strikin[illegible] ama is intended for the edification o[illegible] ple who have warm hearts and lively [illegible] but are not much given to

abstract reasoning; and we ought to regard the question from their point of view, and not from the point of view of critical tourists. The Play, as it stands, is a marvellously impressive and living picture of man's Fall and mysterious Redemption, and the picture would be incomplete and the lesson but half finished, if the Resurrection and Ascension were left out.

My part, however, is to chronicle facts, not to discuss them, and I shall therefore relate in a few words what followed the scene of the Crucifixion and Burial. Two *tableaux* succeed each other, one representing a storm-tossed ship with the tail of a whale disappearing under the waves near it, and on a distant shore Jonah is seen standing after having been disgorged out of the distended jaws of the whale. The other *tableau* represents the Egyptian host struggling in the avenging waves of the Red Sea. This is followed by the various incidents of the Resurrection—the alarming earthquake, the confusion of the Roman guard, the supernatural opening of the

sepulchre, the various visits of the Disciples and women to the empty grave, the different appearances of Christ, the meeting in Galilee, and the final ascent from Olivet, with the apparition of the two Angels. The chorus now appear on the stage for the last time, and sing a jubilant song of triumph. And as they retire the audience, giving vent at last to their long-suppressed emotions, applaud heartily and for the first time.

So ended the most remarkable relic still surviving of the old religious drama. I went to see it with very mixed feelings. From what I had heard and read, I was prepared for a striking exhibition, but also half prepared for some rude shocks to one's natural sense of religious propriety. So impossible did it seem to represent on a public stage and in a worthy manner the sublime story of Gethsemane and Calvary. Well, I have seen it, and I shall go home with the conviction that the thing is not impossible where a vivid faith and an intense devotion are combined in the representation. I have never seen so affecting a spec-

tacle, or one more calculated to draw out the best and purest feelings of the heart. It is, of course, impossible to answer for the feelings of others ; but I can say for myself, and for several other spectators of the Play whom I have consulted, that there was nothing from the beginning to the end that need shock the most sensitive religious instinct. We are too apt to forget that the deepest and the most lasting impressions are generally those which reach the mind through the eyes. A good portrait of an absent friend gives a far better idea of him than the most brilliant verbal description ; and this is true in a special degree of minds not accustomed to trains of reasoning. By means of images imprinted on the eye, their minds will grasp in a few hours a whole series of facts which it would take months, perhaps years, to convey to the understanding without the aid of pictorial representation ; and even then the impression will not be half so real or so enduring as that which passes through the avenues of the senses. Here in a single day the history and destiny of the

human race were engraved on the minds and hearts of some thousands of persons in a way they are never likely to forget. I do not say, though I think it highly probable, that the same effect could not be produced by means of written or oral instruction; but I say, without hesitation, that it could not be produced for years. I am not ashamed to confess, for my own part, that I have realized here, with a vividness I never felt before, the marvellous unity which binds together the Old Testament and the New, so that a series of compositions separated from each other by every circumstance of time and place and authorship are instinctively felt to be one book, teaching one high morality, telling the same tale of sorrowful hope, and pointing to one central mysterious Figure, in whom type and psalm and sacrifice find their meet accomplishment. And certainly, if one tests the Play by the evidence of its fruits, the verdict must be in its [illegible] The people of Ober-Ammergau are re- [illegible] their honesty, their intelligence, and [illegible] earnestness. The Play is acted at

sufficiently long intervals to prevent that familiarity which is apt to breed contempt, and at sufficiently short intervals to renew the impression and carry it on in an unbroken series of instruction. There is nothing in the Play which could offend the most rigid Protestantism. Even the single legend which it sanctions is deprived of its miraculous element —namely, the impression of Christ's face on the handkerchief of Veronica. The effect on the individual actors, too, appears to be excellent, and pre-eminently so in the case of him who acts the part of Christ. He is a wood-carver by trade, and his bearing is modest, gentle, and deeply devotional. He has no objection to converse with strangers on the subject of the Play; and to an inquiry whether he did not feel much fatigued after his physical and moral exertion during the day, he answered, quickly, "Ah, but the honour of it!" All the actors, male and female, are selected with strict reference to character, and care is taken to assign the bad characters in the Play to persons of thorough respectability, so that no suspicion of a

slight can be felt. Tobias Flunger, who acts the part of Pilate this year, played the part of Christ in 1850. He is a modeller and drawing-master, and his daughter Franziska plays the part of St. Mary. Josepha, his other daughter, a strikingly handsome girl, is the principal contralto in the chorus. On the whole, the women's acting is not so good as the men's, but they labour under the great disadvantage of having to strain their voices in order to make themselves heard across the great distance which separates them from the back of the auditorium. Altogether between 500 and 600 actors take part in the Play. On the Monday in Whitsun week the audience amounted to quite 6000, and there was a second representation on the following day, for those (also amounting to thousands) who could not find room the first day.

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